2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

addressed a petition to the Archbishop requesting permission to build a new church. But a year and a half later he ruled in favour of a counter-petition, and gave permission to begin reconstructing the old church. Shortly after this a riot developed out of a meeting called to urge the parish priest to permit the building of a new church. During the commotion, the stone railing around the front of the church was damaged. Six days afterward forty-two people were arrested for disturbing the peace and taken off to prison. After three days the arrested men were released because of insufficient evidence. The court assessed the total damage to the church railing at twenty-two shillings. This incident aroused the village. A month later the new church faction decided to begin work without the permission of the Archbishop. Early the following Sunday, a huge crowd led by Sur Vinċenz asked the parish priest for permission to work on Sunday. When their request was refused, they set off for the site and began to work anyway. That afternoon, Sur Vinċenz hired a band to play for them, and the music attracted people from many surrounding villages. The following day Dun Batist and the parish priest laid the matter before the Archbishop.

All through the month of October 1901 the leaders of the new church faction went in delegations to argue their case before the Archbishop, who was on holiday in Marsalforn, Gozo. The local diarist, on whose account much of the above is based, notes cynically that the Bishop listened with great attention, as he was in debt to one of the leading members. Meanwhile, the parish priest had been able to mediate between the factions. Dun Batist and his followers agreed to stop their work on the old church provided their opponents reimbursed them for their expenses to date. This was arranged. Finally, in January 1902 the parish priest announced that the Archbishop had given his permission for the construction of the new church. That afternoon there was a great celebration in the village, with many fireworks and a guest band, again paid for by Sur Gorġ's grandfather.

But the construction of the new church soon ran into trouble. Sur Vinċenz failed to raise the capital required. As Dun Batist had foreseen, the cost of this grandiose scheme was far more than the village could manage. After the foundations had been laid, the work gradually came to a halt. The village did not begin to rebuild the old church until the end of 1909, when the parish priest set out to raise the extra £2,000 required.

178 241 234 512 milk production (notably the growth in the number of dairy cattle in the Islands) has produced a new kind of operator in Malta, the cows' milk producer, for whom field work is secondary and then based primarily on the production of fodder for his animals and fruit and vegetables for the family.

512 527 796 [241] [234] Sundays and Feast Days bring a break in the routine. Work in the fields lapses but animals still have to be milked and fed. On festa days the whole village goes en fête and to Church. A procession of religious images, members of religious orders, priests, penitents and others to the accompaniment of fireworks and brass bands blaring through the bustle in the narrow streets and alleys fills the evenings of these not infrequent days of festa, fast and feast. These Holy Days and holidays have been the traditional breaks in the round of hard and heavy working days. The present younger generation still enjoys the merriment and processing of these occasions but the Band Clubs have lost for them something of their position of fifty years ago, and the cinema and bright lights of Valletta provide alternatives and additions to the range of possibilities. The young villager of today wants time off not only on festa days but on ordinary working days as well.

[178] [575] [461]

527 796 562 575 The village festa is a communal celebration. Both men and women can share in the religious and social aspects. The Band Clubs established in the most villages during the past hundred years have however been solidly masculine (B/521). Other recreations of the farming community are largely masculine pastimes such as shooting small birds, gossipping in the village squares and bars or at the M.M.U. collection depôt, watching the races at the Marsa course or arguing prices at the Sunday morning market 'Fuq il-Monti' in Valletta. In Gozo the big assembly early each Sunday morning in 'It-Tokk', the main square of Victoria, is the scene of much buying, selling and talking by villagers from all parts of the Island who come each week to the capital but rarely visit other villages. The focal pattern resembles that in Malta, where the bus routes converge on the Urban area and Valletta but provide comparatively little inter-village transport (B/381).

517 443 [184] [494]

178 241 Dissatisfaction with the way of life outlined above, whether for economic reasons (the small remuneration per man/hour of effort), or social considerations (the low status of the farmer, fisherman and other country people) is producing a younger generation anxious to escape if at all possible from following in the footsteps of their fathers and, thereby, accentuating the problem of how the farms of Malta and Gozo are to continue operating.

6:Beeley K-S (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

NOTES

000 [103] 1. Many settlements in the Islands possess Italian and English names often quite distinct from the local Maltese names. Map 1 gives localities with their names as currently accepted in 'English' usage.

2. v. Appendix 1 A; Map 3; and Graph.

[113] [127] 3. The demographic aspects of Malta's development are considered by Richardson (B/561), while economic factors since 1800 are analyzed by Charlton (b/381). The writer draws from both.

4. Except in the north of Malta where settlements of village status are a product of the past hundred years only.

5. Messrs. Rigg Welts, Ltd.

6. Some impression of the expansion of the Dockyard during the nineteenth century may be gained from Appendix 2 B.

[127] 7. A count, from employment files, was made in March 1957, by the writer and Mr. W.A. Charlton; permission being kindly given by the authorities of (at that time) H.M. Dockyard, Malta.

[114] 8. G.W.S. Robinson (B/564) distinguishes Gozo as possessing a pattern of isolated homesteads (1948), although Appendix 3 does not substantiate this.

9. Reference to G.S.G.S. 2" and 6" to the mile maps is recommended throughout : v. Section 7, Preamble.

10. Including members of the religious Orders, which have been important in Malta for five centuries.

11. v. B/91 and Appendix 4 for details of the extent of the Lay Apostolate in Malta and Gozo.

12. From conversations during field work.

13. "Jiena Malti minn in-Nadur" ('I am a Maltese from Nadur in Gozo').

14. v. B/291 and B/280 for background information.

15. In conversation with Mgr. Salamone.

[342] 16. Windows at ground-floor level were in traditional construction for reasons both of defence and privacy, and therefore provide a helpful dating feature.

[525] 17. Lotto - the popular Government lottery.

[527] 18. 'L-Imnarja' (the word is a corruption of 'Luminaria'), held each June at Buskett, includes a day and night of song and speeches and an agricultural show (v. B/286).

19. Now including the Island of Comino.

[113] 20. As there is in some societies; v. PIDDINGTON, R: "An Introduction to Social Anthropology", London, 1950, pp. 169-270.

21. v. Vegetable cropping chart for the Maltese Islands, published by the Dept. of Agriculture, Malta.

[124] 22. In three cases, the farmer himself or a member of the family wrote the daily account, the originals of which are in B/5. The analyses here given were based on translations of the originals by the writer.

23. For discussion of co-operation in marketing v. Section 4.

24. The wide variety of small rotary cultivators, etc., is excluded.

25. List supplied by the Malta Police.

26. Made (1957) by the writer and Mr. W.A. Charlton.

27. Co-operative for American Remittances to Everywhere, Inc.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ.6 Malta EZ.6

FEAST DAYS.

Most of these are made the occasion of general rejoicings in Malta, celebrated either by illuminations, feastings, fire-works or some other open air amusement. 527 • 796

The greater number of the holidays in Malta are in connection with the religion of the people, and are held either in honour of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or of some Saint—as the titular Saint of the Parish or the celestial Patron of the town or village whose day is always celebrated with special pomp in each district.

Of all these *festas*, which are celebrated throughout the year with more or less enthusiasm, we only mention that which is celebrated on the 10th February in honour of St. Paul. 796

Great preparations are made for this day, to adequately celebrate this truly

7: Busuttil 1, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 place during the year in the towns and villages on the day of the festival, held in honour of the titular or some other Saint, there are also other processions, such as that of Good Friday and St. Gregory's day, the origin and description of which will be given in another place.

Having thus glanced briefly at some local recreations of the Maltese which have connection with their religious ceremonies in celebrating the annual festivals in honour of the celestial patron of the town or village, we now come to the other usages and customs, which are observed by the Maltese during the year commencing from that of

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

•527 431 Early on the morning of the 1st. of January, groups of children may be

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

seen perambulating the streets, throughout the towns and villages, each with a small oval-shaped wooden box in hand. 527 431

Every child you meet, in wishing you "Is-sena it-tajba" (a Happy New Year) implores the yearly mite, and this he does by shaking his cash, which no doubt consists of some few farthings or halfpennies, whose dulcet jingle, however, fills his little soul with joy.

The practice of giving "l' Istrina" (a small money gift) to these children, to domestic servants and to persons in an inferior position on New Year's Day is a recognised custom in this Island.

This making of presents on the first day of the year is no doubt of great antiquity, and innocent as is now the custom of giving money gifts to the children and servants on New Year's 527 431 171

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

•527 Day, it was in ancient times done by the
431 heathen Romans as a form of homage
171 to the two-faced *Janus*, the God of the year, especially honoured in that capacity in the first month (January), and the giving of "strina" in January was vehemently denounced by the early council of Auxerre, as an act of Pagan worship.

In the *Monthly Miscellany* for December 1592 there is an essay on New Year's gifts, which state that the Romans were great observers of the custom, even when their year began in March and consisted of 10 months of 36 days each, and also when January and February were added by Numa(*) to the other ten, the calends, or first of

(*) NUMA—a celebrated philosopher born at Cures, a village of the Sabines, on the day that Romulus laid the foundation of Rome.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

January, was the time on which they made presents, and even Romulus (1) and Tatius (2) decreed that every year *vervine* (3) should be brought as an offering to them with other gifts, as a token of good fortune for the New Year. 527 431 171

Tacitus (4) makes mention of an order of Tiberius (5) forbidding the giving or demanding of New Year's gifts unless it was in the calends of January, at

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(1) Romulus—the founder of Rome was the son of Mars, he was ranked by the Romans among the 12 great gods, being the founder of their city and Empire, and the son of the god of war.

(2) Tatius—king of Cures among the Sabines, made war against the Romans after the rape of the Sabines. He was murdered at Lanuvium B.C. 792.

(3) *Vervine*—a plant which has been connected with some of the superstitious rites of the Greeks & Romans.

(4) Tacitus—a celebrated historian born in the reign of Nero and was destroyed by the secret dagger of an assassin on the 13th of April in the 276th year of the Christian era.

(5) Tiberius—a Roman Emperor after the death of Augustus.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 431 171 which time the Senators, as well as the knights and other great men, brought gifts to the Emperor, and in his absence to the Capitol (1).

527 777 It is also the custom in some places of Malta for men to go about strewing some lime in the door-ways on New Year's day. Some idea of good luck may perhaps be associated with the lime; there is no tradition, however, as far as is known, whence this custom arose.

527 203 New Year's greetings in the shape of visiting cards, are very profusely exchanged on this occasion, especially among the better classes.

527 431 533 Groups of street musicians go from house to house, either on the last day of the old year or on the morning of

(1) Capitol, the temple of Jupiter at Rome built on the top of a hill.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the 1st of January playing popular pieces of music, and this they do as a New Year's greeting. These men will rarely leave a house until some little gift of money is bestowed upon them as a remuneration for their trouble in paying their annual congratulations.

527 431 533

ST. ANTHONY'S DAY.

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Among the popular Maltese customs in which animals play a leading part, that of the blessing of the quadrupeds of the equine species, in Valletta, on St. Anthony's day, is the most familiar.

On the morning of the 17th January (St. Anthony's day) a number of horses, mules, and donkeys, decked out in ribbons and tassels, are driven in procession in front of the Vittoria, a little

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

ALL FOOLS' DAY

1st. April

This particular day has been selected for playing off little tricks whereby ridicule may be fixed upon unguarded persons, especially the younger sort. 527 • 522

The favourite jest in Malta, on the 1st. day of April, is to send some one upon an errand for something grossly nonsensical, who is sent home in a state of bewilderment as to what the affair means. The joke is carried so far as to send letters making appointments in the name of persons who, it is well known, must be absent from the house at the time fixed upon, and the laugh is always in proportion to the trouble given.

When the person falls into the snare the term "Leuuel ta April" (the first

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 of April) which amounts to "April
522 fool" is applied with laughter.

527 The custom of sending one upon a
522 bootless errand on the 1st. of April is
174 perhaps a travesty of the sending hither and thither of our Lord from Annas to Caiphas, and from Pilate to Herod. It is possible, however, that it may be a relic of some old heathen festival.

It is conjectured that April day is celebrated as part of the festivity of the New Year. That day used to be kept on the 25th of March, and it is certain that the commencement of the New Year, at whatever time that was supposed to be, was always esteemed a high festival, and this was the case both amidst the ancient Romans and with us. Now great festivals were usually attended with an octave—that

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

is, they were wont to continue for 8 days, whereof the first and last were the principal; and you will find the 1st. of April the octave of the 25th of March, and the close or ending consequently of the feast. Hence it is supposed that the 1st. day of April became a day of extraordinary mirth and festivity, especially among the lower classes who are apt to pervert and make a bad use of institutions, which at first might have been very laudable in themselves. 527• 522 174

A writer in "Poor Robin's Almanac" for 1760, gives the following metrical description of the modern fooleries on the 1st. of April, with the open avowal of being ignorant of their origin. 527 522

[539]

"The 1st. of April some do say
Is set apart for all Fools' day,
But why the people call it so

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 Nor I nor they themselves do know.
522 But on this day are people sent,
539 On purpose for pure merriment,
And though the day is known before
Yet frequently there is great store
Of these forgetful to be found
Who are sent to dance *Moll*
Dixon's round.
And having tried each shop and stall
And disappointed at them all
At last some tells them of the cheat,
Then they return from the pursuit
And straight way home with shame they run
And others laugh at what is done,
But 'tis a thing to be disputed
Which is the greatest fool reputed,
The man that innocently went
Or he that him design'dly sent."

527 522 171 This custom of imposing upon each other on the 1st day of April, and sending one another upon frivolous, ridiculous and absurd errands, whatever be its origin, appears to be universal throughout Europe.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

In France one thus imposed upon, on the 1st of April, is called "un poisson d' Avril," in England such a person is called an "April fool," in Italy "un pesce d' Aprile" and in Scotland a "Gowk." 527 522 171

It is curious that the Hindoos practice precisely similar tricks on the 31st. of March, when they hold what is called the "Huli Festival."

During the "Huli festival" when mirth and festivity reign among the Hindoos of every class, one subject of diversion is to send people on errands and expeditions that are to end in disappointment and raise a laugh at the expense of the person sent.

The "Huli" is always in March and the last day is the general holiday. [114]

Colonel Pearce in his "Asiatic Researches" proves this to have been a cus-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

114 171 522 527 tom, from immemorial time, among the Hindoos. The least inquiry, however, into the ancient customs of Persia, or the minutest acquaintance with the general astronomical mythology of Asia, would have told Colonel Pearce that the boundless hilarity and jocund sports, prevalent during the "Huli Festival" in India, have their origin in the ancient practice of celebrating with festival rites the period of the vernal equinox, or the day when the New Year of Persia anciently began (*)

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527 ***ASCENSION DAY***
Lapsi

The Maltese celebrate Ascension day by parties and picnics on the water.

(*) Maurice in his "Indian Antiquities."

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

In the afternoon of the Feast, the great harbour and the several creeks, especially that of Calcara, present indeed a very lively appearance. Yachts, boats, and small crafts plough the deep, the greater part sailing, with flags and streamers flying in the breeze, laden with people, mostly clad in gay summer costumes, which they put on for the first time on this day as a sign of the approaching hot season.

Some of these gay parties keep on their crafts, singing and playing guitars and melodeons, whilst others disembark on some shady rock on the sea-shore, where they spread their table-cloths and sit down to enjoy the edibles which they bring with them.

A little after sunset, when the numerous and jolly picnic parties have emptied some bottles of wine, the boats

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 are seen putting off the shore and
501 steering their course homewards.

527 The custom of making swings on
526 Ascension Day, is very common in Malta, especially among the country people. In almost every village, lots of women and children may be seen swinging together and singing merrily on the day of *Lapsi*.

527 No reason could perhaps be assigned
193 by the Maltese for the practice of celebrating *Lapsi* by parties and picnics on the water, and for making swings, except that they follow the custom of their ancestors.

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796 ***St. JOHN'S EVE***
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859 Not unlike other nations, the Maltese are not indifferent in celebrating

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 on the morning of this day, was indeed very great.

When the procession was over, most of the country people repaired to the upper Barracca, which was then roofed over and consequently offered a very comfortable temporary asylum. Here they amused themselves till the evening eating, drinking, and singing.

St. PETER AND St. PAUL

796 529 One of the principal occasions of amusement for the Maltese is, no doubt, the popular feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, celebrated at Notabile or Città Vecchia on the 29th of June.

[192] This feast is known by the name of l'IMNARIA which is a corruption of *luminaria* (illumination) from the illumination which takes place at the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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Cathedral Church of Notabile on the eve of the said festival.

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On the morning of the feast—as soon as the procession, which is led by the Bishop, enters the Cathedral Church—large crowds, especially of country people in their substantial holiday finery, and wearing their hoarded ornaments of massive gold, drive at a racing speed to Boschetto, where, careless of the excessive heat of a broiling sun, they divide into companies and under the shades of the leafy orange trees in the beautiful garden, they seem quite happy in eating their sumptuous dinners, consisting chiefly of stewed rabbit, ham, pies, cheese and an allowance of common wine, which they keep in large dark glass bottles, or in tin cans where the indispensable liquid is less liable to being spilt.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 When the viands are fairly consumed and the wine commences to use its influence, the jolly parties amuse themselves in dancing, singing, and playing their guitars and melodeons.

527 These gratifications are carried on up
541 to 3 or 4 p.m., when the picnic-makers drive back to see the races which are held on this day just below the walls of the old City, where the stout swarthy country women, to secure a good view, occupy their seats on the field walls for hours until they get nearly broiled in the blaze of a mid-summer sun.

The races commence at 6 p. m. and consist of mules, horses, and mares, which are entirely unharnessed, and the riders without any means of maintaining their position, except their legs which they fix under the animal's

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

belly, while with a thong in each hand they keep urging the gaily bedecked beasts to reach the goal first. 527 541

Soon after the races the merry parties set out on their return to their dwellings at quite a racing speed. Now you see every description of vehicle vying with its neighbour, and every driver urging with whip and voice to a reckless break-neck gallop his steed, adorned with two or more rows of tinkling bells hanging round the neck. 527 492 493

Flags and variegated silk handkerchiefs are streaming from the carriages, and ribbons from the horses' heads. Every cart is crammed, as only the Maltese can cram on anything on wheels. The sun-burnt country women are laughing and pelting the by-standers with apples, and waving tall green reeds and poplar branches in their 527

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 hands, whilst the men are either playing their favourite melodeons or singing, and from group after group the chorus of the gaily dressed young girls rises all along the roads leading to the respective villages.

543 Before leaving the description of this very popular amusement, I think it will not be amiss to say something about the famous *Imnaria* exhibition, which is held every year at Boschetto and is always thoroughly enjoyed by a very large attendance of visitors.

This agricultural show, which was instituted by Sir William Reid, Governor of Malta, in 1857, is held on the 28th and 29th of June, the eve and the feast day of St. Peter and St. Paul, under the auspices of the "Società Economico-Agraria" and under the patronage of H. E. the Governor of the Island.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

St. ROCCO RACES

The famous horse race which is annually run at Pietà on the 16th of August, the feast day of St. Roque, is a source of great excitement to the large crowds of people who flock thither from all parts of the Island. 527 541 [196]

Although the races do not commence before 6 p.m. yet, as early as 3 o'clock, the Pietà creek is all covered with hundreds of boats of every description, laden with people; and all along the Pietà quay, from the Bathing house — the place from which the competing animals start—to the winning post, at a little distance from "Portes des Bombes" — is always lined with thousands of spectators in order to witness the sport.

Some 5 minutes before 6 o'clock, a gun is fired as a signal for the people to clear the way; a second report is [202]

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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then heard, and some 10 or 12 donkeys are seen running at full speed, driven by jockeys, amidst great shouts and roars of laughter from the spectators, caused sometimes by the stubborness of some of the long eared quadrupeds, which instead of running keep kicking right and left, not being in humour perhaps on that day of being tormented by the constant goading of their merciless rider.

The donkey race is immediately followed by the horses first, and then that of the mares.

It is really grand to see the noble creatures, darting along the race course with neither saddles or bridles, and mounted barebacked by the gaily dressed jockeys.

When the Government prizes, which consist of gay stripes of richly brocaded

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

silk and lama cloth of gold, are distributed, all the crowds disperse and the victorious champions, loaded with honours and caresses, and covered with garlands of flowers and ribbons, are conducted in triumph through the streets of the town amidst the deafening cheers and acclamations of the populace. 527 541

These races were instituted in 1593 during the reign of Grand Master Verdala, as popular rejoicings after that the plague, which was introduced in Malta through the carelessness of some of the authorities, had played great havoc for eighteen months amongst the inhabitants of the Island. 527 54 175 [731]

From this race all the other races which are held on different occasions during the year, both in Malta and in Gozo, owe their origin.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 These races were first held on St. 541 Roque's Feast day in consequence of 776 the working of miraculous cures of 755 the plague by St. Roque who was 796 specially invoked by persons afflicted, 195 while stricken himself with the desease, at Piacenza, in Italy.

THE "VITTORIA"

527 ***Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary***

[796] The 8th. of September, the day dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is no doubt the grandest and the most popular day for the people of these Islands.

Both the streets and church of Senglea—the town in which the feast is celebrated—present on this occasion a most lively appearance.

[784] The grand illumination and the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

beautiful display of fireworks, on the eve of the festival, attract thousands of spectators not only from the towns and villages of Malta but also from the sister Island.

Hundreds of Gozitans flock to Malta in order, as it were, to take part in the general rejoicings held on this special day of the anniversary of the raising of the great siege of Malta, which ended in the total repulse of the Turks, after a most heroic defence by the Knights of St. John, united to the bravery of the Maltese, under the intrepid Grand Master Jean La Valette, in 1565.

In the afternoon of the feast (8th Sept.) the grand harbour presents indeed a very lively appearance, there being boat racing and the *giostra* or greasy pole, the prizes for which are given

?: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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524 by Government in commemoration of the defeat of the Turks (*)

The famous annual boat race of the 8th. of September draws as great a concourse of people, comparatively speaking, as the far-famed Oxford and Cambridge contest annually does along the banks of the Thames.

The Valletta harbour quays, from the new extension, right up to the old Barriera, and all the overlooking lines of walls and batteries, on both sides of the harbour, are early taken possession of by thousands of spectators who take great delight in this exciting annual regatta.

The course is from "Ras Hanzir"

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[796] [648] (*) Both the regatta and the *giostra* were formerly held on the 10th of August, St. Lawrence day—The Parochial feast of Vittoriosa, the principal seat during the memorable siege of 1565.

7: Busuttil I[illegible]-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

to the Custom house, the whole length of which is always crowded with thousands of picturesquely painted boats, yachts, and small crafts with living cargo. 529 526

The race course in the centre channel is always well kept clear by a couple of steam launches, and the Port Department gondolas.

The races consist of (1) four-oared fishing boats (2) double pair and single pair passage boats—that is boats employed for the conveyance of passengers —and (3) four-oared *cajjicchi*.

The boats used for racing, on this special day, are always very gaily painted and gilt, being also of a much lighter and sharper build than the others of the same kind, and the best stalwart men are always selected for rowing." [501]

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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526 When the victory prizes are awarded, the beaten racers return crest-fallen in silence to their creeks, whilst the victors, cheered by the immense crowds of spectators, keep ploughing the deep, with the prize flags tied up at the prow end of the boat, waving in the breeze.

The boat race is immediately followed by the *Giostra* or greasy pole, which adds not a little to the amusement of the crowds assembled to witness the sports.

The *Giostra* is a large barge, anchored opposite the Custom House buildings, in the centre of the port, having a long tapering pole, placed almost horizontally from the head, with a small white and red flag fixed on at the end, and made slippery with grease, soap, and other ingredients. At a given signal a number of boys first, then lads and men,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

in their bathing costume, immediately begin the task of endeavouring to seize the flag, one after another they continue tumbling into the water and raising again to renew the attempt. 527 526

Gradually the greasy matter diminishes and the competitors are able to advance further. At last the winner with the prize flag in hand, amidst great shouts of "bravo," loud whistling, and clapping of hands announces the end of the National Feast for that day.

The 7th of September is also commemorated by a melancholy, and at the same time imposing, ceremony at the Co-Cathedral Church of St. John in Valletta. 796 769

On the morning of this day the celebrant, preceded by the Chapter and Clergy, descend into the crypt beneath the High Altar, and while chanting

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 *requiems* for the repose of the souls of
769 the knights interred there, and all the other dead who fell in the great siege, sprinkles holy water upon the tombs, while the great bells, in the towers above, peal mournfully the legend which the Maltese voice in the words "Il-libera tal Cavalieri" (the funeral of the Knights).

527 For some years past a purely civil commemoration of the glorious Victory of the 8th of Sept. (1565) when the Cross triumphed over the Crescent, has been celebrated, however, not on the 8th of September, but on the 1st Sunday after that date in Valletta, and the Sunday after that at Vittoriosa and Cospicua, while on the following Sunday the celebration takes place at Sliema and Zabbar.

In Valletta, the St. George's Square and Str. Reale, are worth seeing on this occasion.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Str. Reale, from Fort St. Elmo to Porta Reale, is aglow with the red and white colours of Malta and knights' flags; and at night is ablaze with thousands of variegated lights.

St. George's Square—opposite the Governor's Palace—is ornamented with splendid clusters of flags, pennons, gonfalons, shields, battle axes, spears, captured cannons and some entire suits of armour, kindly lent from the Palace collection. These suits create great interest, being the original property of the knights, some of the pieces bearing the evidence of shots and sabre cuts.

From the various stands, selected national bands fill the city with sweet music, and in the evening elaborate fire-works illustrate the figures and deeds of the knights.

In connection with this feast, horse

88

527 In connection with this feast, horse
541 races take place at Sliema. The con-
525 course of people and the excitement are not less, on this occasion, than they are on the St. Rocco festival, the events being always contested with great spirit, and large sums exchange hands in the bets laid upon the respective favourites.

527 The national Feast at Cospicua is celebrated on the hillside of Sta. Margherita which is, on this occasion, very tastefully decorated and illuminated with Venetian lights to the delectation of many thousands.

[541] At the Sliema celebration the fireworks are set off on barges on the water and thousands cheer the beautiful display.

At Vittoriosa—the very scene of the final victory on Sept. 8th 1565—the commemoration of this most glorious event in History is fitly celebrated.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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The square is most tastefully got up with splendid trophies of arms and red and white flags. From each of the trophies broad red and white sashes are seen hanging, on which the names of those who distinguished themselves by some brave and noble deed in the memorable siege, are written in gold letters. 527 186

The decorations of the column of Victory, in the middle of the square, are simply magnificent. This column is surrounded by four figures, representing 4 Grand Masters in full armour, one of these is the immortal La Valette, who at the head of his knights, and supported by the population of Malta—men, women, and children—succeeded in hurling back, discomfited and disgraced, the Moslem, that would from Malta have sallied forth to the conquest of Europe. 527 186 211

During the day the bands, playing 527 533

527 533 lively marches, parade the principal streets of the old town, preceded by large crowds of people with palm leaves and Maltese flags in their hands.

527 541 In the evening the enthusiasm in the beautifully illuminated square is intense and prolonged.

[533] Large crowds from all parts of the Island flock here to listen to the choice selections of music, played by the bands on the square, and to witness the grand display of fireworks.

These are indeed worth seeing, especially one set piece. This represents a real fort with the red and white cross banner of the knights at the top. This fort opens fire and is attacked by several Turkish men-of-war, with sails set and the crescent flying at the mast heads.

As these miniatures of old-fashioned

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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galleys come sailing across the square, on wires stretched over the people's heads, towards the fort, they open fire in great style. One after the other they meet their fate, for the fort peppers them cruelly and finally sets them on fire, so that soon—hulls, sails, masts, yards, crescent flags, and all the warlike things about them are in few seconds wrapped in flames and destroyed. 527 541

Before leaving the description of the celebration of this National *fète* at Vittoriosa, I wish to mention that hundreds of loaves are distributed to the needy of that town on the morning of the feast. 527 735

Worth mentioning is the custom which prevails, on the 7th of Sept. among the women residing at Rabato (Notabile) and in the country surrounding it. These, to celebrate the com- 184 527 533

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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184 memoration of the Victory won by the
527 Maltese in the great siege of 1565,
533 instead of coming to take part in the amusements held in Valletta and in the other towns, meet in groups on the terraces, or flat tops of their houses, and keep singing merrily till very late at night.

ANOTHER NATIONAL FEAST

527 The celebration of the glorious vic-
186 tory won by the Maltese over the Turks in 1565 has been of good use to the Maltese, It has enabled them to comprehend more keenly the historic value of this Island.

[175] In fact, some two years ago another
[648] national commemoration has originated at Città Vecchia, on the 3rd or 4th Sunday of September, to celebrate the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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liberation of the Maltese from the yoke of the Saracens by Count Roger of Normandy in the year 1090. 527 186 [175] [648]

A liberal programme is now annually arranged by the Committee embracing every kind of attraction at Notabile.

PILGRIMAGES TO MELLEHA (*) 778 788

On the last two Sundays of September, every year, the roads leading to Melleha are alive with merry parties, especially country people, on their way to that village, in order to visit the

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(*) Melleha is a village some 10½ miles distant from Valletta, and about an hour's ride from St. Paul's Bay. It is renowned for the very old, perhaps the oldest, Sanctuary in the world, dedicated to the B. Virgin. This Sanctuary was founded by St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, while he was in Malta (58 A. D.) for the convenience of the faithful who lived in those neighbourhoods. Over the small altar is a picture of St. Mary, covering another old drawing of the same, executed by St. Luke. [361] [776] [532]

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

778 788 Sanctuary dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

[782] [527] When the devout visitors recite their prayers in the venerated shrine of the Madonna, and leave behind their offerings, such as candles, oil to be burnt in the lamps before the image, waxen and silver limbs &c., they come out and devote the remainder of the day to amusements.

173 778 788 The annual pilgrimages to Melleha in September are supposed to have originated after the victory won by the Maltese over the Turks in 1565. The siege being raised on the 7th of Sept. —the eve of the day dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin— the Maltese, in token of gratitude for the help received from the Virgin, in those trying days, made pilgrimages to Melleha, to offer prayers before the mirac-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

SAINT MARTIN'S DAY

•527 One of the greatest family feast-days, among the Maltese, is that of St. Martin's, which is held on the 2nd and 3rd Sunday of November.

Happiness and true enjoyment reign supreme, in every household on this [593] special day. Pater and materfamilias entertain at dinner their married sons and daughters, with their respective consorts and children, besides nephews, nieces, and others allied by ties of consanguinity.

Every body enjoys his share of sweetmeats on St. Martin's day, with a due allowance of Marsala or some other sort of good Sicilian wine.

527 262 857 Children look forward with pleasure to this day, being always regaled, by either their parents or some other member of the family, with a small bag

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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crammed to the top with hazelnuts, chestnuts, figs, sweets and other edibles, besides a nice small roll studded with hazelnut-kernels and covered all over with sesame. 527 262 857

With these bags and rolls the happy children come out walking along the streets, proud of what they were lucky to get, then they meet in groups or parties and indulge in games for the nuts.

The most favourite game for children on this occasion is what they call "ta 'l castell" which means hitting at the castle. The castle consists of three nuts put near each other, topped by a fourth. They each arrange, say two or three of these castles in rows, and keep throwing by turns—every one wins the castle or castles he succeeds hitting and demolishing. 527 524 857

527 No reason can be assigned for the
174 origin or meaning of keeping St. Mar-
tin's feast as a day of merriment among
[171] the Maltese. The usage is persisted
in without any association or tradition
to account for it, but the merry mak-
ing in the neighbouring island of
Sicily at this time of the year, when
the new wine is made use of for the
first time.

527 Wine drinkers are of opinion that
262 one can judge best of the flavour of
273 wine after eating some nuts first—
this perhaps is the reason why nuts are
made so much use of on this merry
day.

174 Moresin refers the great doings on
527 this occasion to an ancient Athenian
festival observed in honour of Bacchus,
on the 11th, 12th, and 13th days
of the month of *Anthesterion*, corres-
ponding with our November.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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[P.109]

ANCIENT AND MODERN SPORTS, USAGES, CEREMONIES &c.

OF THE

MALTESE PEOPLE

THE MAY POLE

This is one of the most amusing out- 527.
door diversions which at the time of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem was kept annually on the 1st of May in the square facing the Grand Master's Palace in Valletta.

This popular amusement has been lately revived in Malta and is kept on some particular feast days.

The May Pole consists of a tall mast [526]
erected in some open place or square

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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526 and different kinds of provisions are hung to a hoop fixed on the top of it.

The mast is rubbed with tallow from the bottom to about a third of its height, and on a given signal, from one of the Authorities, some young men, mostly of the lower class, run to the mast, where they form themselves into different parties, the nimblest one amongst them climbing on his comrades' shoulders who defend him from the others, and he who first reaches the flag, which waves on the top of the pinnacle, receives a money prize and carries off the provisions.

The art of mounting to the top consists in twisting successively linen or cotton bands and straw round the slippery part of the mast, so that while the foot rests on the band first knotted, the hands are employed in fixing a second and a third on which, being sus-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

pended by the hands, it is necessary to untie the first knot with the feet, in order to replace it a second time on the fourth step of this kind of ladder. The greasy part of the mast being once surmounted, the remaining part of the ascent is comparatively easy, and the adventurer, who has already overcome the greatest difficulty, is encouraged to proceed by repeated acclamations from the crowd. 527 526

When the pinnacle is reached the brave climber rests on a little seat made of ropes, and untying the provisions throws some of them amongst the people, whose eagerness to seize them always causes some laughable disputes.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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MAY DAY

175 529 824 Historians mention that there was a time in Malta, during the Government of the Knights of St. John, when it was customary on the 1st of May to deck the Grand Master's palace balcony, and the doors of those who were invested with the Grand Cross, with branches [194] of trees. It appears that this sign of a holiday, which was introduced in Malta by the families from the island of Rhodes, was a remnant of the worship of the sun, formerly adored by the Rhodians.

171 529 824 Bourne cites Polydor Virgil, as telling us that among the Italians the youth of both sexes were accustomed to go into the fields in the Calends of May, and bring thence branches of trees, singing all the way as they came, and to place them on the doors of their

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

houses. This, he observes, is a relic of an ancient custom among the Heathens, who observed the last 4 days of April, and the 1st day of May in honour of the goddess *Flora* who was imagined to be the deity presiding over the fruits and flowers.

THE CUCCANJA

This is an entertainment which was formerly given by the Grand Master to the Maltese on Shrove Tuesday, the last day of the Carnival.

Long beams were fixed against the guard house opposite the palace, and between each of the beams, rope-ladders were fastened, the whole being covered over with branches of trees in leaf, to which were tied, from top to bottom, live animals, baskets full of eggs, hams, sausages, and all kinds of provisions.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

529 526 175 This wooden edifice was crowned by a globe, made up of hoops and covered over with linen cloth, on which stood the figure of *Fame* holding a flag with the Grand Master's arms. Crowds of people assembled on the spacious square, and at a given signal commence to attack the *Cuccanja*, and the provisions became the property of those who, having seized them, were able to carry them off in safety through the crowd.

This lively proceeding was the cause of furious disturbances—the possessors of the various prizes having a rather rough time of it, before being allowed to retire with what they captured.

To the first enterprising individual who reached the figure of *Fame* was allotted some pecuniary remuneration which was well earned, considering the struggle he had gone through to attain

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

his object, and on the standard being taken to be returned to the Grand Master, the cloth covered globe burst open and out came a flight of pigeons. 527 526 175

The Maltese never allowed either foreigners or soldiers to share the profits of the *cuccanja*.

This entertainment which has been suppressed since the reign of the Grand Master De Rohan (1775-1797) was a a source of great delight to the Maltese people. [656]

BOWLS

A game of bowls is a favourite pastime in Malta. 562

The players arrange themselves in sides of three or four each, and each man is usually provided with three bowls, which he marks differently for distinction.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

carries a certain spice of gambling, the players of *Morra* congregate at some street corner or a public house and indulge in a game for small stakes which the winner generally spent in assuaging the thirst of both parties, a proceeding to which the loser as a rule made no objection.

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FAIRS

Every Sunday morning there is a fair held along strada Mercanti, Valletta. The goods exposed for sale in these weekly fairs are of all descriptions, and attract large crowds, especially of country people.

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Besides these Sunday fairs there is also another fair held annually at Floriana on the mornings of the feast days of St. Calcedonio, St. Giacomo, and

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7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

443 St. Anna, which are celebrated on the
527 24th, 25th, and 26th of July. These
[796] fairs, however, which were once very
[178] popular, have now sunk into insignificance and most likely will before long entirely disappear.

443 Fairs have long been regularly held
191 in most parts of Europe and Asia, and they appear to have originated in the Church festivals, which were found to afford convenient opportunities for commercial transactions. The concourse of people being then so such greater than on other occasions.

USAGES

195 The ancient Maltese formerly kept
562 their wives in the strictest retirement. They held the opinion that women should never appear but twice in public,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

THE ACACIA OR SPONGE-TREE

(Gazzïa)

824 Our ancestors had a strong aversion to introducing or bringing in the acacia or sponge-tree with the other flower-plants in the house.

[763] They believed that if the acacia were brought into the house the head thereof would die within twelve months.

THE NEWT

825 Our superstitiously inclined believe that when one kills a newt and leaves its tail contorting or wagging on the floor, that tail will be cursing the parents of its destroyer!

COAL-DUST AND SOOT

777 The throwing of coal-dust or soot
529 instead of lime before a door on New year's day betokens gloom and bad luck.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

NEW YEAR'S SUPERSTITIONS

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A superstitious dread still attaches to some one of the family keeping absent at dinner time on New Year's day. He who doesn't dine with his family on New Year's day is expected to die at the end of that same year.

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527 262 787

He who eats hotch-potch soup on New year's day is to gnaw the ham bones all the rest of the year.

Those who eat cabbages on New year's day groan for a whole year.

OIL, SALT AND WINE

777 787

The spilling of oil is considered a very unlucky omen by the Maltese. The spilling of salt or wine, however, betokens good luck.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

explanations of them. Two kinds of explanations have to be treated with some caution, the local one and the Christian one . . . and we shall find ourselves going back for the true causes to the worship of the sun and of the seasons.

The revel, easily degenerating into the brawl, has always found opposition, as in the thunderous verse of an old poet who branded the Midsummer processions as

> Of Edinburgh the great idolatrie
> And manifest abomination.

Other forces have militated against them besides the disapproval of the austere. As another old writer has rather obscurely remarked: 'No suffimen is a greater fugator of phantosmes than gunpowder.' Other such fugators are periods of increased popular education and of quickened pace in national life. These forces have been active enough in our own times, and few Midsummer customs have survived them; but all of them were originally the spontaneous outcome of certain impulses in the make-up of human beings, and thus, past or present, they are of permanent interest to us."

There seems little doubt that the Night of Fires belongs to that very early civilization of which, as has been suggested elsewhere, the Maltese are amongst the direct descendants. What more appropriate than the adaptation of these ancient fires to the honour of that Saint beneath whose banner there happened all that is most valiant in Maltese history?

In one form or another practically all the "seasonal" customs familiar in other countries appear in Malta: All Fools' Day, with its affinity to the Hindu festival of Huli; May Day, when the children gather green bows in honour of Flora; New Year's Day, when lime is strewn on doorsteps in token of good luck; but Malta's most popular holiday is the period of Carnival. Its

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

he cares to attend the Cathedral of Mdina, the island's earliest capital, on the 4th November, he will hear a Mass said for the repose of the soul of Roger the Norman, Count of Sicily, who ended the Arab occupation of Malta in 1090 and is there commemorated as "Deliverer of Malta and Founder of the *mensa* [table] of the Cathedral, the Bishop and the Canons." Should he chance to be in Malta before the beginning of Lent he will have the opportunity to witness in the carnival festivities not only the jollifications common to other Mediterranean carnivals but also features of more local interest, such as the Parata dance on the Palace Square, which takes its symbolism from the capture of a Maltese bride by a Moslem corsair.

If he prolongs his stay into the summer he will see on the 29th June, the feast of S. Peter and S. Paul, one of the most characteristic of Maltese popular functions in the densely thronged Mnarja races. These races, for horses and donkeys, are of unknown but undoubtedly great age. The course is a piece of straight, hard road leading uphill towards the big square in front of Mdina, a square known as the Saqqaja. Here, from his great stone box, the Grand Master in former days, in these days the Governor of Malta, hands the banners of victory down to the winning competitors, while interested spectators watch the proceedings from two smaller but similar boxes, flanking the Grand Master's and belonging to some of the leading families of the island.

The name Mnarja is a corruption of the Latin *luminaria* (illumination), for it was the custom on that day to illuminate the churches of Mdina and the adjacent Rabat in honour of the two saints. A more picturesque if unfortunately less trustworthy tradition derives Mnarja from Hymen, the goddess of marriage, it being supposed that the young men of the island were formerly in the habit of choosing their wives from among the maidens crowding to watch the contest. This much, at all events, may be urged in support of the latter theory, that until modern times Maltese brides

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527 would insist on the stipulation being inserted in their
173 marriage settlement, their *kitba taz-zwieġ*, that their husbands
584 should take them to the Mnarja every year.

The banners given in prizes to the present day are long
526 and narrow pieces of brocade of different colours called
361 *paliu*, which it is the custom of the fortunate winners to take back to their casals to be used as the altar-cloth of the parish church for the ensuing year. The casals, it should be explained, are the 'villages' of Malta, if 'village' is the appropriate term, for they are stone-built compact townships with populations often running into five figures. The Maltese word for them is *hal*.

291 Again, our visitor will learn that the *faldetta* or *ghonnella*—the true Maltese term is *stamina*—of the Maltese women does not owe its existence, as some people allege, to the need for defence against the excessive gallantry of Bonaparte's troops, but is of much more ancient origin. If proof were needed, there is in the Royal Malta Library a print of the year 1576 showing a Maltese lady wearing the national head-dress. The *ghonnella* is a voluminous hood of rich silk—black everywhere save in the villages of Zabbar and Zejtun, where it is blue and is called *xurqana*—stiffened inside the top edge by a piece of cardboard about a yard long, one end of which rests on the head, while the other end has to be held. Originally, it was really, like the Turkish *charshaf*, a skirt or petticoat (which is what the word *ghonnella* means) thrown up over the head. Later it was curtailed, for which reason it is sometimes called *nofs ghonnella*, a half skirt; but it is still cut to show the placket-hole—in point of fact, half the placket-hole—of the garment from which it has sprung.

[191] This striking and picturesque mode of female adornment or, rather, concealment constitutes Malta's one characteristic article of dress and is the local method of shrouding a woman's face and form, a custom common to southern latitudes from as far east as India to as far west as the Azores,

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

is no sacrifice they will not gladly make for the greater dignity and beauty of their churches. Take, for example, the case of Mġarr—one of the smallest and poorest of the parishes of Malta and the one most cherished by that great seaman and lover of Malta, the late Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher. Here between the two wars the inhabitants, nearly all hard-working peasants, under the enthusiastic leadership of their parish priest, Father (later Monsignor) Edgar Salomone, built a great new church by their own efforts, bringing their weekly contributions to the building fund in eggs and fowls and vegetables and whatever else they produce.

At street corners statues of saints, sometimes also of souls enveloped in a purgatorial blaze, afford them ever-present reminders, encouraging or minatory as the case may be, of the next world; in this one they love the great ecclesiastical ceremonies, particularly the processions which are one of the features of Maltese life. These assume on Good Friday something of the character of a Passion Play, with members of lay confraternities staggering along Merchants' Street in Valetta beneath the weight of life-size groups of the Passion carved with gruesome realism. I have also seen these processions in Palermo, where I have been shocked at the flippancy and irreverence not so much of the onlookers as of the actual participants. The Maltese play their parts in these functions with profound and solemn devoutness. Indeed, some of them may be bearing their burden, whatever it is, in fulfilment of a self-imposed penance, concealing their features behind a hood with eye-holes that covers the head.

But on the annual *festa*, the local saint's day, of their village they give themselves up wholeheartedly to rejoicings, which are definitely on the noisy side. For they are punctuated by the explosions of crackers, maroons and every procurable form of noise-producing apparatus, and they are illuminated by ingenious, locally made fireworks. On these days the casals are a brave sight as they fly from the top of every house of any importance the flag of

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the Grand Master who was their founder or their patron, gay with the rich heraldry and colouring of the last phase of the age of chivalry. We have seen in Chapter XII that Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch, inglorious but Maltese-speaking and on excellent terms with the Maltese country-folk, gave one of his names and his special patronage to no fewer than three of the casals. Zabbar's subsidiary name was Città Hompesch, that of Siġġiewi Città Ferdinando, that of Zejtun Città Beland, the maiden name (Bylandt) of Hompesch's mother. Similarly, Curmi was known alternatively as Città Pinto, Zebbuġ as Città Rohan. In the cases of Senglea and Pawla the Grand Masters de la Sengle and de Paule were actually the founders.

It affords a pleasant and richly coloured glimpse into a romantic past, and happy evidence of the attachment of the Maltese to their unique historical traditions, to see the great square armorial flags of these Grand Masters in their proper tinctures waving on gala days over their casals.

July, August and September, the hottest months of the year, are Malta's *festa* season *par excellence*. At that period, and especially in August, there is an absolute orgy of what irreverent young officers are apt to call "festering," and the two islands resound from end to end with the detonations of petards and bombs. At night the parish church of whichever casal is celebrating its patronal feast is prettily illuminated, while elaborate set-pieces are displayed regardless of expense and other fireworks of a less stationary nature accomplish, or fail to accomplish, their destined trajectory. The amount spent annually by the population on fireworks and mere noise-making contrivances is positively staggering.

The first village *festa* I attended—I had arrived in Malta in the month of August—was in one of the smaller, more remote and more rustic casals. The church bells were clanging with no attempt at rhythm; rockets and Roman candles were going off in rapid succession in all directions; Catharine-wheels were rotating around one; the noise was

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1940) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

almost as varied and barbaric as at the Holy Fire in Jerusalem. During the rare pauses between the bangs of the explosives and the splutterings of the pyrotechnical diversions one was just able to catch the sound of the chanting of an ecclesiastical procession, faintly audible reminder that the excuse for all this sound was a religious anniversary.

Nor was this by any means all. In an open space outside the village a band was trying in the face of considerable difficulties to play a secular air from some opera, all the bandsmen dressed in what might at a distance have passed for a naval Commander's white uniform, with aiguillettes of yellow cord. All, that is to say, except the *maestro*, whom I still see in my mind's eye as an elderly, worn-out, languid, apathetic cynic in a drooping Panama hat, with a cigarette hanging limply from his lower lip. Two hundred yards away another band was competing with an entirely different tune. Not that it mattered in the least. Nobody was paying the slightest attention to the music; and, even if they had been, neither band had a hope of making its output prevail over the other component parts of the general din.

Likewise do I recall a *festa* in Gozo, where the band, in this case not in uniform, was playing as it marched round the village square. But it afforded the pleasant sight of a man in a brown Homburg hat nonchalantly beating with his right hand the big drum which was being carried fore and aft by two small boys, while fanning himself with his music, which he held in his left.

These particular bands were professionals hired for the occasion, for the villages in question were not large enough to possess bands of their own. But in the large casals the band is a local institution of far wider significance than the specifically musical. Next to the parish church it is probably the most important social nucleus of the township, and influential personages regard it as a distinction to be offered the patronage or honorary Presidency of its organization. It may have even a political connotation. In the towns which